2: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1945
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241 471 431 the latter can claim a contingent right to the land and cannot be dispossessed without offence to their common ancestor or ancestress; or because the land was virgin at the time of the gift and the donor 'cut' (*kie*) it for the recipient in virtue of being the tendaana of the area. Thus all farm-land is either owned or in process of becoming owned.

471 613 The ownership (*solɔm*) of farm-land is a precise jural concept among the Tallensi. Briefly, it is vested in a lineage and forms the most important part of the lineage patrimony (*faar*). When, in course of time, this lineage splits up, some of the *faar* land will be apportioned among the resulting segments, each of which will retain perpetual and exclusive ownership of its portion. The rest of the *faar* land remains the common property of the whole lineage. Though the bulk of farm-land is owned by nuclear lineages, there is land owned by lineages of larger span than the average nuclear lineage.

471 428 613 577 To say that land is owned by a lineage is equivalent to saying that it is generally acquired by right of inheritance. All males of the lineage have the right to inherit lineage land, but at any given time control over it is vested in the head of the lineage, by right of seniority. He inherits (*vaa*) what amounts to full usufructuary rights within the limits of the co-existing rights of the other members of the lineage. The utilization of the land is at his discretion; he disposes of the crops; and in some settlements he is nominally free to pledge or to sell the land. But he is subject to restraints which observation shows to be very effective. He is bound to provide fairly for the wants of those who share the labour of farming with him. Tallensi formulate this obligation in terms of reciprocity within the productive unit, which they regard as a matter of natural justice and moral duty. They emphasize, however, that there is also a [686] strong practical sanction behind the rule. A man who deals meanly or unscrupulously with his younger brothers, sons, or brother's sons will find that they leave him at the first opportunity; and the strength of this sanction has increased now that young men, and even girls, can easily slip away to work abroad. In accordance with this obligation a lineage head always consults his dependants about the disposal of land, crops, or other patrimonial property.

688 471 432 There is also a religious sanction, the converse of the obligation to one's dependants, and the ritual projection of the common interest of the lineage in its patrimonial land. Inherited farm-land is a sacred trust of the ancestors. Their labour won it for human use, hallowed it, and preserved it for their descendants. It belongs to them. To pledge it is a slur on them; to sell it a sacrilege. 'It will kill deaths (*de kura kum*)'—the offended ancestors will cause deaths in the family of the seller—the natives say. And the strength of this sanction is such that only dire necessity will make a man sell ancestral land in the settlements where this is allowed. It is, in fact, an uncommon thing for farm-land to be sold, both for technological reasons, and on account of the ritual sanction against sale. In places like Tongo, land sales do occur, however, but appear to have been more frequent in the past than at present. Three out of every four nuclear lineages at Tongo possess farm plots that they claim have been purchased during the past two or three generations.